

January 25, 2007

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Honorable Ravalli County Commissioners  
Hamilton, MT

Ravalli County Commissioners  
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Gentlemen,

Just a note to say thanks for your courteous manner in handling the various points of view RE: the recent Club boxing event held at the Ravalli County fairgrounds, and to add a little more for your consideration.

It is obvious that all three of you are or have been active in various sporting activities, all of which carry varying degrees of risk of injury or even death. I too enjoy the same types of activity. I endorse the philosophy, "we don't quit playing because we get old, rather we get old because we quit playing". Having said that, I would like to point out a major difference between those sports and the so-called "boxing" event in question.

Alan you mentioned several dangerous sports you have enjoyed over the years, but the most serious injury you received was skiing. Two points I would like to make: One, I would imagine that you started out skiing just like me and most skiers, namely stumbling awkwardly around on the bunny hill. It is not likely that you started out the first time on a black diamond run. Second, from the very first time, it was a matter of you pitting your skills, courage, and fortitude against the mountain. The moguls are simply there where you can challenge your skills to navigate successfully through them. You are the one to pick the course and the speed. Is there a risk of injury? Of course! That is part of the fun of it. But never at any time is the mogul deliberately trying to hurt you, knock you out, or kill you.

Howard you mention your days of rodeo participation. Certainly a very dangerous activity. I have had some experience with that also and I have a lot of friends and acquaintances that have been there as well. But again, I know of no one who didn't start out usually at a very young age maybe riding sheep, goats, calves, or even the family milk cow. I know of nobody foolish enough to jump on the back of a bronc or bull at the rodeo, being out of shape and with no prior experience. But even there, with the exception of some bulls that want to hurt you, the main objective of the animal is simply to get you off its back. It is never the primary objective of the animal to hurt you, knock you out or kill you.

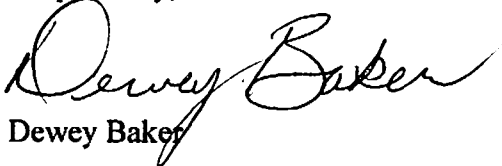
Greg, you said it very accurately based on what you saw of the video taped event and compared to your several years experience in boxing, this was not boxing but rather a "gladiator" event.

Boxing is a sport that I enjoy and have participated in. However I should like to point out that it is different from almost all other sports in that the primary objective is to hurt the opponent. And I mean hurt him badly and quickly before he can do the same to you. The ideal end of the fight is a well placed blow that sends the opponent to the canvas where he stays for the eight count. Then there is no argument over who is the winner. Hopefully he recovers with no permanent injury. That is why in my opinion it is of paramount importance that boxers get the proper training and conditioning before they step into the ring where the goal is kill or be killed.

Now gentlemen, it is of no consequence to me whether the Club boxing events continue or not. I attended the one in question and there were certain aspects of it that I enjoyed. It is highly doubtful however, that I will attend another. It is a virtual certainty that when you mix fighting, alcohol, young men, young women, and a large crowd, there is going to be trouble sooner or later. But the thing that concerns me most is when a young man, out of shape and inexperienced, and often goaded into it by his buddies, steps into the ring with an experienced well conditioned fighter. I just don't want to be a witness to some foolish kid messing up his life. I realize that some responsibility rests with the kid who agrees to get in the ring against those odds, but I don't think that enables responsible adults to give license to such a risk. If the only criterion in making a match is similar age and weight, it is only a matter of time until there is a serious injury or death.

Thank you for letting me express my opinion. I sincerely appreciate the time you dedicate to trying to come up with sensible solutions to many difficult problems.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dewey Baker". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping underline.

Dewey Baker